

'Dead city': Singapore closes workplaces in virus fight

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Singapore's usually bustling business district was almost deserted Tuesday as most workplaces in the city-state closed to stem the spread of the coronavirus after a surge in cases.

The financial hub has won praise for using a tough regime of testing and tracing contacts of the sick to keep its outbreak largely in check, but has

seen a jump in new infections in recent days.

Authorities previously resisted the kind of draconian measures seen in worse-hit countries—but have now ordered the closure of all businesses deemed non-essential as well as schools, and have asked people to stay home.

There were just a handful of people in a usually packed major square in the [business](#) district Tuesday morning as workplaces closed.

"It feels like a dead city, everyone is scared, they're all hiding at home," Jenny Lee, who works at an insurance brokers, told AFP.

"All the crowds have disappeared."

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong urged Singaporeans to "do our part to support our [healthcare professionals](#) by staying at home, and complying with the enhanced measures in place".

Schools will close from Wednesday, with the tougher restrictions set to last a month.

The city-state reported 66 more COVID-19 cases Monday, bringing its total so far to 1,375, including six deaths.

While these figures are low compared to many other countries, authorities nevertheless decided to take action after a rise in locally transmitted cases in the city of 5.7 million.

The government at the weekend quarantined almost 20,000 foreign migrant workers for two weeks after a growing number of infections were discovered in their dormitories.

Large numbers of foreign labourers, mostly from South Asia, work in construction in the city-state and usually live in sprawling dormitory complexes.

Globally, the virus has claimed more than 74,000 victims out of 1.34 million confirmed cases.

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